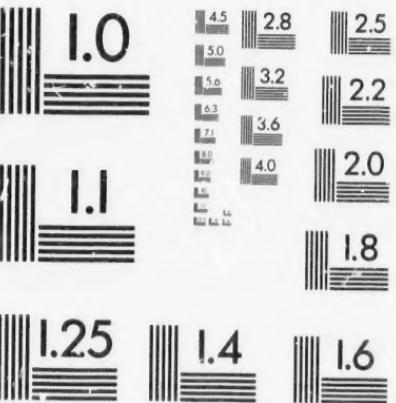


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LETTER

TO

A CLERGYMAN

Urging him to set free a BLACK GIRL he held in
SLAVERY.

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A LETTER TO A CLERGYMAN,

Urging him to set FREE a BLACK GIRL he held in SLAVERY.

REVEREND SIR,

PERMIT me to speak to you freely of one matter in which, I am persuaded, you offend your God. I dare appeal to him who searches the heart, that, so far as I know my own heart, I have no worse design in speaking of it than regard for the glory of God, and love to your person; and, therefore, I hope you will take what I have to say in good part. The matter I mean is, the concern you have in the most infamous and accursed of all commerce, the buying and selling of man, who "*is the image and glory of God.*"^a

Is it so then that one man is born a Slave, and another a Lord? Or (to use an old metaphor), are one part of mankind born saddled and bridled, and the other part booted and spurred, ready to mount their harnessed brethren? No, Reverend Sir, all men at their birth are equally naked, helpless, and destitute of marks of authority. You could not distinguish between his royal highness and the child of the poorest beggar that walks the streets. It is a maxim equally agreeable to scripture and reason, and peculiarly dear to every British subject, that all mankind are born upon a level, and that no man can rule over another but by mutual consent. As, therefore, you have not the consent of that Girl over whom you rule, I would desire you to give a solid answer to this question: "By what authority dost thou these things; and who gave thee this authority?" For my own part, I see no authority you can have, but that you are able to do it. I confess, it would be esteemed very good authority in a world of tyrants; the same by which the great fishes devour the small; but it will never satisfy the conscience of a tender Christian. If you have more power or wealth than your slave, it is owing to this cause only—that God hath been more liberal to you than to her. His superior liberality to you or me, should be a powerful incitement to us to be more compassionate and helpful to our poor, oppressed brethren; and particularly to exert ourselves, to the utmost, for the redemption, protection, and education of slaves: But that it should be employed for the purposes of oppression and slavery, is, without doubt, a most horrid abuse of the kindness of God, and a lasting reproach to ourselves. Tell me, Reverend Sir, why you do not sell me? I am your brother, and your slave is your sister: You are not able. I bless God for his kindness to me, which hath put it out of your power to deal with me as you have done with my sister. Tell me, why may not your slave sell you? What right does she want, that you have, but power? I hope she wants inclination too.

The Apostle Paul prescribeth us to hospitality, from this consideration, that "some have thereby entertained Angels unawares." Preposterous as it may seem to you, I must confess that I would be afraid to engage in the slave trade, lest I should be found to injure some superior beings, angelic or divine, in disguise. Had you lived when Angels visited the earth, in human form, you would not have forbore to buy and sell them if you had an opportunity. Had

you

^a 1 Cor. xi. 7.

you lived eighteen hundred years ago, you would not have scrupled to buy and sell my blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, if, at least, he had been born black, and you had met with him before the fame of his miracles began to arise ; for, as " he was not only made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion as a man ; but, moreover, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient :" ^b How could you have distinguished between him and such as you do enslave ? But be that as it will, it is plain you buy and sell Christ mystically, that is, those who are united to him by faith, and are in the scriptures commonly called, " the body of Christ," and " the members of his body." ^c Charity requires me to hope, Reverend Sir, that your girl whom you hold a slave, and her mother whom you sold, are members of the body of Christ ; because you could not fail to be touched with more than ordinary compassion towards these poor ignorant creatures, to use uncommon diligence to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to pour out many a fervent prayer for God's blessing upon the means you used with them ; all which I trust would not be in vain : But if they be members of the body of Christ, does not he account them precious as himself ? Are they not one spirit with the Lord, of his flesh, and of his bones ? Does not he who touches them, touch the apple of his eye, and wound him in the tenderest part ? Yes, Reverend Sir, for " In all their afflictions he is afflicted : in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bears them, and carries them all their days." ^d He cries from Heaven to all who hurt them in their liberty or property, as he did to him of Tarsus—Saul, Saul why persecutest me ? Take heed then, lest he should resent what you do to them as much, if not more, than if it had been done to himself ; and least, when he shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and all nations are gathered before him, he should say to you, " depart from me thou cursed into everlasting fire ; for I was in prison, and thou visitedst me not, but detainedst me a captive. In vain will you reply, When did I see thee in prison, and visited thee not, but detainedst the captive ? for he will answer, " in as much as thou didst it unto the least, the very least of these, thou didst it unto me."

But if you tell me your slaves cannot be members of Christ, because they are ignorant, obstinate and wicked ; I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee : Be it so ; yet they may be converted from the error of their way. Others who were as desperate, like as they, are now singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. And if, in any future time, they shall be united to Christ, your guilt will be accounted the very same as if they were in him already ; for he loves them now as dearly as he will then ; because he has loved them with an everlasting love : Nay, though they should be eternally lost, it will make no alteration in your guilt ; because whether they be saved or lost, for aught you know they may be saved. Besides, by consenting, in one instance, to the buying and selling of man, you subscribe your approbation of the whole of the slave trade, ancient and modern ; and yet, certainly, some slaves have been good Christians ; so you are still a buyer and seller of Christ. Reverend Sir, if these things are so, may not your sin bear a comparison with that of Judas ? Did he sin knowingly ? Surely yours cannot be through ignorance. Did he sin from covetousness ? I appeal to your own conscience, if yours proceed not from the same source. Was he an Apostle ? so are you. Did he sell his master ? so have you. Judas sold the natural body of Christ for the very price appointed by the law of Moses for a slave, viz. thirty pieces of shekels of silver, Exod. xxi. 32 ; you have sold his mystical body at the very same rate.

Know you not, Reverend Sir, that the body of your slave is (or at least may be) " the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in her, whom she has of God ?" Her " body is the temple of the living God, as he hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people." Again, " know you not that she is the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in her ? If any man defile the temple of God," (and what can defile it more than to enslave it ?) " him will God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple she is." ^e Take heed, lest all the sanctity of your office, and all the attainments of your profession be not able to shield you from this threatening. Simon Magus, after a fair profession of faith in Christ, was declared to be " in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," for offering to " purchase the Holy Ghost with money ;" and, perhaps you are too confident, if you are entirely free from fears of being in the same state ; for your sin is greater than his, in as much as you have actually purchased and sold the temple of the Holy Ghost, wherein he dwells, and all that it contains.

^b Phil. ii. 7, 8. ^c Rom. xiii. 27. Eph. v. 30. ^d Isa. lxiii. 9. ^e 1 Cor. vi. 19, 2 Cor. vi. 16. 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

I said, that by your conduct, you subscribe your approbation of the whole slave-trade. I farther accuse you as an accomplice in all the cruel and murderous treatment that slaves have ever endured. I know you disapprove of it; but that avails you little while you help forward the affliction. While you lay the foundation stone, upon which the whole structure of their cruel treatment is raised, it will not justify you to say, Let not the building go on.— While you open the sluice, in vain do you cry out, stop the stream. You do what in you lies to make all men believe the slave trade lawful; and the native and necessary consequence of that, with respect to the most part of mankind, is every species of cruelty. While you teach men to consider their fellow-creatures as their property, in vain will you teach them to be tender-hearted towards them; in vain will you attempt to restrain them from taking every advantage of them which their covetous hearts, or haughty dispositions can inspire or suggest, whether by hard-labour, hunger and nakedness, or by beating, whipping or killing. Can you really believe that any man will consider his property as his equal, and treat it accordingly? I defy all the world to prove it unlawful for me to kill and eat that man whom I may lawfully buy and sell, like my ox or my horse. Is it not very evident that I have the same right to butcher a man myself, that I have to sell him to a butcher? I must not indeed wantonly kill my ox, or destroy any part of my property; neither might I kill my Negro without cause, upon supposition that he were my property; but a little necessity or advantage would justify the one and the other. If such be the consequence of your conduct, how horrible! in vain will you object here that slaves are rational creatures, and must be treated as such. Reverend Sir, if they be rational creatures, then the whole world is not a sufficient ransom for one of them; then they cannot be redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Reverend Sir, you know that He, who well understood their worth, bought many of them to God by his blood, for nothing less would have been a sufficient price; and they shall sit with him upon his throne for ever and ever, and, at the great day of Judgment, they shall stand at his right hand, and doom many of their masters to eternal slavery, torment and death. "Know you not that these slaves shall judge the world?"^f If you reply, that you do not buy and sell their souls; I answer, neither do you whip or kill their souls, (blessed be God! this is out of the reach of their haughtiest tyrants); but as you cannot buy and sell their bodies without their souls, the almighty Judge will account that done to the man which you do the body. Were you self-confident, Reverend Sir, you would not, to vindicate your conduct, plead their rationality; but, like your West-indian and continental friends, who deal extensively in that commodity, you would deny that slaves have any rational faculties at all, or any soul different from that of a brute:—Hereby you would at once establish the lawfulness of the trade, and quiet all the pangs of conscience. Bursting her troublesome shackles, you would feel yourself at full liberty to roam without remorse through a field extensive and unconfined as your fancy, and to bargain in human flesh at any rate, and to any amount you pleased. And, believe it, that argument which takes away the souls of slaves, whencesoever you will fetch it, is the only one, that will render your conduct fair and honourable; for as long as you believe slaves to be men, busy, meddling conscience will not suffer you to keep quiet possession of your spoil. The traders that deny the rationality of their slaves, act, at least, an open and consistent part. They attempt not the impossibility of keeping a good conscience, and the profits of an unlawful trade too, therefore generously quitting all claims to the former, they turn their whole attention to the latter. But, Reverend Sir, will you tell me what is the genuine reason why your friends of the slave-trade, act a part so incongruous to human nature as to degrade a fourth part of mankind into the rank of brutes? Sure it must be some uncommonly forcible temptation that shall reduce me to assert, That my brother, (who is indeed wiser than myself) is an irrational animal. I can make only one conjecture about it, viz. That it possibly flows from a secret conviction of soul that no feebler spring will sustain that commerce upon which they have resolved,

Reverend Sir, Let me ask you does not your practice in keeping a slave contradict your daily prayers? It surely does. Do not you pray for the downfall of Babylon? Yes. Then you pray in effect for the total abolition of slavery, see Rev. xviii. 11, 12, 13. But were the city presently heard "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and shall no more arise," where would you take your stand? Not among those that say, "Rejoice over her, thou Heaven, and ye holy apostles

"and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her ; but among the Merchants of the earth,
 " who sweep a d moist over her, because no man buyeth their merchandize any more ; the
 men is a practice truly anti-christian, and it is a lasting reproach to the Protestant name that,
 it should not be possible to An ichrist. O shame ! O indelible disgrace ! That Protestant,
 Presbyterian ministers, who of all others should keep Earth off from her, should be found
 publicly committing fornication with the great Whore, drinking themselves drunk, and stu-
 pify ng th ir confidences with her filthy wine. But blessed be God, though hand join in hand
 chanciers shall be covered with its ruins. It is hoped the period is not far distant. Whoever
 now makes in the popish or despotic kingdoms of Europe, and, upon the unavoidable conse-
 quences of the late memorable revolution in America must see that Providence is making haste,
 to overturn forever the pillars of tyranny, and to restore the world to its liberty. For this
 glorious day let us often and fervently pray. No friend of mankind need be discouraged for
 fear that the spirit of freedom should not soon reach Africa ; for when the flame is once kind-
 led it will quickly spread to the utmost boundaries of the earth. Navigation hath already
 explored every coast, and hath hardly left an island throughout the globe undiscovered. It
 remains only that it should change its tyrant masters (under whom that useful art hath been
 too long abused to the vilest of purposes) for friends of mankind, and then it will carry liberty
 and happiness, temporal and spiritual to every corner of the world, with more speed and effi-
 ciency than ever it carried slavery and death.

I would further ask you, Reverend Sir; How can you appeal to the heart searching God, and
 say, as a minister "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God," as a Christian
 I discharge my duty to my fellow-creatures as faithfully as I could, while you are obliged to
 teach that girl, that she is entirely under your power, and has no right to use any means for
 the salvation of her soul, but such as are subservient to the secular interests of your family.
 How can you lay your hand upon your breast and say. I wish to love my neighbour as myself,
 and. Whatever I will that others should do to me, I endeavour to do the same to them ?
 What sort of obedience give you to the Apostles command of preferring one another, with bro-
 therly love, in honour, or, of giving to servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye
 also have a master in heaven ?" &c. &c.

Be pleased, my dear sir, to consider that, except the word of God, liberty is the most precious
 gift of Heaven to man, a gift without which there can be no enjoyment in the world, a gift be-
 stowed as freely and universally as the light of the sun, or the air that we breathe, a gift the
 love of which is far more deeply implanted in the heart of man than that of life itself, a gift,
 consequently, of which no man may deprive another without being guilty of the highest con-
 tempt of God, and his best bounty, and of something more horrid than murder with respect
 to his brother. Shall a heathen say,

" — in Cato's judgment,
 " A day, an hour of virtuous liberty

" Is worth a whole eternity of bondage ?"
 And shall a Minister of the Gospel reply, I will enslave, and till I die I will not renounce
 my liberty to enslave ?

I would entreat you, Reverend Sir, to consider what a baleful influence your example will
 have upon others. Doubtless it has already drawn others into the sin, and it may draw oth-
 others into it for generations after you are rotten in your grave. Many will shield themselves
 against strong arguments with this : surely when the Reverend Mr. ——, a good minister,
 does it, there cannot be any harm in it. In a word, though nothing could be said against slav-
 ery from scripture or reason, but that advice of the Apostle to a slave, " If thou mayst be
 " free, use it rather ;" it were enough for a man of a tender conscience, who needs only to
 know his master's will, that he may do it. But, Reverend Sir, you have continued so long
 in this horrible sin that I am afraid your conscience is wasted, your understanding darkened,
 and your heart hardened, through long habit, that you cannot see the evil of it. I am per-
 suaded that your conscience checked you at the beginning, but you quenched it. Be sure it will
 awake, and when it will, you may wish you had never bought a Negro though you had died
 for want.

Therefore

Therefore, set free your slave directly. I declare to you, in the name of the Lord, that until she be free, all her labour and her gain to you will be cursed, and the Lord will not cease to have a controversy with your soul. Sell her not; her price will be most cursed. By selling her you become a partaker of another man's sin, instead of wiping away your own. *Her Liberty is your first duty*, and till this is performed none other will be acceptable. Though you treat her like a queen, without this, you but offer sacrifice for robbery. 'Say not, What shall I do for her price?' 'The Lord is able to give thee much more than that.'

I never saw a man of any learning or sense who had the confidence to defend that infamous practice of which I have been speaking; nor indeed any man whatsoever, but such as were themselves most evidently enslaved to avarice. Like profane swearing, drunkenness and whoredom, there are many to practise it, but it has few defenders. The four following objections contain the substance of all that I can conceive to be said in its favour:

1. Their colour may be improved as an argument to shew the propriety of enslaving the Negroes! "What! black Devils! What are they fit for but to be trodden under foot? They have the very image of the Devil! Certainly if they have not been designed for some despicable purpose they would not be black." Such an argument might reddens the cheek of a Negro. I believe you blush for them that use it. Blush for yourself then; for it prevailed with you to engage in the Slave-trade, or it proves that you want nothing but an opportunity to enslave white people.

But to answer the objection: Reverend Sir, if you maintain that the Negroes have the image of the Devil because they are black, I will maintain, with greater probability, that you have his image because you are white; for this reason, that twenty white Ghosts are seen for one black: But the truth is, the Devil is so contrary to man, that in the day time, and among a white people, you will always find him black; but in the night time, and among the Negroes, he is invariably white. Were you to meet him in Africa, if you did not cast your eyes upon his cloven feet, you could not distinguish him from your brother. Reverend Sir, being a white man, you are accustomed to have a black idea of the Devil, and I doubt not but you would have taken the first Negro you ever saw to be him, if, at least, he had proceeded to torment you. But put yourself in the place of a Negro, and the thought will apply equally well to a white man. Allow me, Reverend Sir, to transport you, for a moment, to the banks of Senegal or Gambia, and to metamorphose you into an innocent shepherd, who never saw nor heard of a white man. Let me suppose, that while you tend your flocks in some green pasture, a boat full of British sailors makes towards you. You spy them at a distance, and gaze; but, as they draw near, you see plainly men of a strange, unheard of colour. You stand amazed. You recollect: the instructions of your nurse, the tales of your companions, and your own imagination unanimously concur to make them a company of Devils. Amazement gives way to horror. You fly: But you see your pursuers advancing, and your terror adds to their speed. You are seized and bound. Your companions share the same fate, and you are all committed to the care of one of your pursuers, while the rest go in quest of more of your countrymen. Your dread and horror are unutterable. You find yourself entirely under the power of that hideous monster, whom you supposed to be the Devil. You and your companions are conveyed on board a vessel, and transported, I shall suppose, to the West-Indies. Reverend Sir, I shall not attempt to unfold your thoughts during the passage; but I may safely suppose, that they were none of the most favourable towards the white people. When you are landed, the first thing you notice is a number of your countrymen, toiling, sweating, fainting, dying under the severity of their drudgery, and the torments of men. You see more faces of the same colour with theirs who transported you thither, and without any appearance of sympathy, compassion, or love towards you in any of them; but, on the contrary, all of them filled with the same aspiring pride, the same domineering haughtiness, the same contempt and hatred of you which you know the Devil to possess. Reverend Sir, what would be your thoughts in this situation? Would it be an extravagant imagination for you to conceive, that you were arrived in Hell, and that all the white people you saw were Devils, whose only office with respect to you was, hating, whipping, tormenting and killing. If you should happen to survive, you would come, indeed through time, to be undeviated; for you would find some friends among the white people, which would also let you know that your oppressors were of the same species: But still you could not help being astonished that

there

there was so striking a resemblance between them and the Devil, as made you mistake the one for the other, and for so long a time.

If it were needful, after what I have said, to give a serious answer to the objection, I would observe, that the Devil being a spirit can have no colour, and that it is merely by a figure of speech we call him black. Therefore his image cannot consist of blackness of colour, but of moral or figurative blackness, that is guilt. Hence the whitest man may be as black or guilty as the Devil, and the blackest may be exceedingly white or fair in a moral sense. Again, God being a spirit, his image cannot consist of any colour black or white, but of fair qualities, viz. knowledge, righteousness and holiness, with respect to which all men of what colour forever are upon an equal footing. It is true God did not without design form the Negroes of a different colour from us, but that, very different from the infernal construction put upon it by many white people, was a design full of wisdom and goodness like all the other works of the benevolent Creator. To a white skin, which reflects the rays of the sun, the heat of the scorching climate of the Negroes would be intolerable; therefore God hath kindly cloathed them with black, which, because it does not reflect, enables them to bear the hottest climates without inconvenience. Reverend Sir, were you or I in Guinea, we would earnestly wish for a black skin. What shall we say then of the white people, who turn God's kindness to the Negroes to their destruction? What words can paint their infernal conduct black enough? How strongly do men impose upon themselves, as if an imaginary connection between a black colour and unworthy deeds did really justify slavery! as if a black coat were naturally and necessarily guilty, and a white one innocent! If indeed it could be proved that there is a natural, intrinsic superiority in white above black, and that it bears the same relation to the inferiority of the black that tyranny does to slavery, without any mixture of that which subsists between father and son; I say if these two impossibilities were once proved I would agree that Negroes may be enslaved, but not till then.

2. You plead that it is better for them to be slaves than to be free. Is it then in the height of your generosity that you enslave? Is it because you love your neighbor so dearly as to prefer his welfare to your own? Give me leave to suspect this excessive generosity. I am afraid that, among the slave-traders, there are some forid wretches that would not suffer the Negroes to continue in slavery if that were best; but they would strive to get the best state for themselves, and yet I see no emulation among them to exchange with their slaves. Besides, it is not easy to conceive how beats and buffetings, blood and wounds, bruises and broken bones are desirable things, or preferable to a safe and whole skin. But you will say, though slavery be not beneficial to all yet it is so to the Negroes, for they are different from all people, and have a disposition peculiar to themselves, and experience shews that they thrive better bound than free. I would ask, Is it their great Master in heaven that hath given them that slavish disposition, which turns liberty into a curse? If it be, he can justify himself without putting you to the necessity either of pleading wickedly for God, or of doing evil that good may come; therefore let him find out some other way to confer upon them this disguised blessing, and do you abstain from all appearance of evil. But it is their human masters, (I am widely mistaken) I should say, inhuman monsters who rule over them that implant this disposition into their minds. How is it possible for that man to have any thing manly in him who is taught from his youth to consider himself as a beast of burden? How can anything noble spring up where the very first buds of sense or reason are crushed to death? Have not the brightest geniuses that ever shone been completely extinguished by slavery or confinement? Does not even a brute sink below itself by bad treatment? And can it then be otherwise with them who are slaves from age to age, and from their birth to their grave? But surely their slavish disposition will not be charged as a fault upon themselves, but upon those basets of all wretches who sink their minds into that condition; and grievously will they answer it. O devilish barbarity! for a man to beat and bruise his brother, till he hath made him stupid and brutish, and then to treat him as a brute, excusing himself that he relishes nothing else! O Lord God to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. Lift up thyself thou Judge of the earth, render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. Rife, for the oppression of the poor, and for the sighing of the needy, and set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. Let us, Reverend Sir, let us, for shame, set ourselves to remedy rather than increase the slavish disposition of the Negroes, and let no obstacle, no disappointment, no discouragement

couragement whatsoever hinder our perseverance in such a benevolent design. Were the Negroes free, and properly encouraged and instructed, they would in a few generations become as noble and free and high-spirited as ourselves.

3. The example of the Jews is plead in favour of slavery. They indeed had multitudes of slaves. The devoted Canaanites whom they cou'd not kill, they were, it is likely, permitted to enslave; but what the Jews did to them is not to be imitated by us, because the Lord hath not, so far as we know, devoted any other people but themselves indiscriminately to destruction. The Gibeonites forfeited their liberty, and were deservedly enslaved, but, at the same time, by a special command of God. If people forfeit their liberty, let them lose it still. But what have the Africans off'ched against the laws of Great Britain or America, that we should traverse immense seas, and range their deserts to enchain them? Do the laws of Britain forbid any Negroes to be born in Africa? If they do, by what argument will you justify them? If they do not, how will the example of the Jews justify your conduct? I grant, indeed, that the Jews engag'd farther (though not so far as you) in the slave-trade, and recurred to servitude men who had as good a right to be free as themselves: But for this the Lord severely chastised them: In return, he sold them by thousands and millions into the hands of the most cruel masters that ever ruled. Reverend Sir, I am not without fears that you, and your friends in the slave-trade, may also procure for your country the vengeance of Heaven in the same way, or in some other no less grievous. Beware of forging chains for your children.

It may be thought that the law of Moses allowed slavery: But, 1st. it might be necessary for Moses to make laws about slaves, for the sake of those who forfeited their liberty, and were enslaved lawfully. 2d. Moses, without approving of slavery, might make laws to prevent cruel masters from abusing their slaves. Lastly. Though it should be granted that the law of Moses permitted the Jews to keep slaves, slaves in every respect like yours, yet that will not justify you. In the infancy of the world, when men had little knowledge and experience, the history and example of a few ages only, and above all a very small portion of divine revelation, many things might be permitted which cannot by an means be suffered now in the fulness of time, "when the mystery that was hid from ages and generations is revealed; " when life and immortality are brought to light; when there is no longer a favourite people, or any distinction of nations; "when they who were not beloved are beloved;" when "they who were not a people," but slaves, "are become the people of God;" when the natural rights and privileges of men are understood, and, in a word, when the light of the Gospel shines with meridian splendour. If Moses's law permitted slavery without limitation, the words of our Lord in another case must be applied to it—Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so.

4. Many think that the slave trade is fully authorised from Gen. ix. 25: *Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall be unto his brethren.* The connexion and force of this argument must be as follows: Slavery is entailed upon the seed of Canaan, therefore also upon every Negro, Reverend Sir, I hope there is no man who is quicksighted enough to see the force of this reasoning, but will be able fully to refute it by such arguments as this: The Grand Turk wears a turban, and therefore ought to be held the sole author of all the hurricanes in the West-Indies.

If the seed of Canaan be doomed to slavery what, in the wide world, is that to the inhabitants of Africa? What have they to do with Canaan, or his curse? You are more likely to be of the seed of Canaan than they. They can shew by probable arguments that they are descended, not of Canaan, but of Mizraim (or Egypt) and Cush (or Ethiopia) who inhabited Africa, anciently called Ham: But as Canaan forsook his brethren and settled among his cousins in Asia, from whence Europe was peopled, you can offer little or no evidence to prove your descent from Japheth rather than Canaan. At any rate you can produce no argument to prove that you are not descended of Canaan but what will conclude equally in favour of the Africans. If you say that the Negroes are the seed of Ham, the author of the crime that brought the curse upon Canaan, and therefore that they ought to be punished with slavery as well as the Canaanites, I will answer that this is to pronounce the judgment of God unjust. Since he restricted the curse to Canaan, no man may extend it further. I confess indeed, it looks very plausible to say, that Canaan was no more guilty of the sin of Ham than his brothers, and if it be just to punish him, it must be equally so to punish them for it; but it is perhaps not true, at any rate it is not solid reasoning, and methinks it discovers a malicious disposition and

towards our fellow creatures, and a cruel fondness to become the executioners of God's justice. Why God executed this punishment upon Canaan rather than any of his brethren we know not, if it be not that he only was then born; but we can render probable reasons why he executed it upon him rather than upon Ham or his whole seed. The crime of Ham was very heinous, if all circumstances be considered, especially that he had very lately seen the whole world desolated for sin, and that his brethren could not move him to repent, or join with them in making reparation for his guilt. To pass such a crime, without exemplary chastisement, could not fail to be very detrimental to an infant world. Ham therefore is punished. The wisdom of God however judged that no personal punishment was adequate to the crime; therefore to afflict him more deeply, and also for the greater terror of others, *he is punished in his seed.* But that God might mix mercy with such a judgment, one branch only of Ham's seed is punished, while the other three are suffered to escape. That God meant to restrain the curse to Canaan's family is sufficiently evident from this, that though it is thrice repeated, yet it is never applied to Ham, who committed the crime, and in whose loins the other brothers were, but to Canaan only. Why then should you, Reverend Sir, act so malevolent a part towards mankind as to curse whom God hath not cursed?

As to Canaan's bearing the punishment of his father's Sin, I need not trouble myself to vindicate to you the justice of God in that matter; for you know he had guilt of his own which deserved all that severity and greater. But let us suppose, for a moment, that the Negroes are included in Canaan's curse, yet your conduct is, in my opinion, as defenceless as before. It does not appear to me that these words, "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren," ever authorised a son of Noah to enslave another. They are indeed prophetic of what would eventually happen to the race of Canaan, and they vindicate the providence of God for suffering them to be enslaved, and for letting loose wicked men upon them rather than upon others; but they conferred no authority upon the race of Shem or Japheth to enslave them. The reason is, that no prophetic threatening alters the path of man's duty in the least from what it was before, or implies a command to him for accomplishing the threatening. Hence, whatever was the duty of Shem and Japheth to Canaan before Noah cursed the last, continued to be so still. They had no right to say, "Our father hath, by the spirit of prophecy, cursed Canaan, therefore, though we were till now bound to love him as our brother, yet, henceforth, we may treat him as a brute." But rather "Our brother is doomed to severe punishment! But, thanks to God! we are not appointed the executioners, nor commanded to withdraw our fraternal affection from him, and alter our conduct towards him; we are left at liberty, as formerly, to protect him, as far as we may, from all oppression, and especially from such as may wickedly pretend authority from our father's prophecy, to enslave him." To illustrate what I have asserted, let us compare this threatening with others: God says, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell." Does this authorize you and me to slaughter every wicked man we see, that we may fulfil his word? No; we are rather to endeavour their reformation. God doomed his own Son to the Cross: But had any man a right to crucify him for all that? Christ said to the Pharisees, "I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city." Was it therefore no sin to persecute the Apostles of Christ? But, lest you should pretend that these instances are not parallel, I shall produce others, in all respects similar to that under consideration. They shall be taken from Jacob's benediction: see Gen. xlvi. "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitation. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath for it was cruel; I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." Did this curse confer the smallest degree of authority upon the other tribes to persecute and scatter those of Simeon and Levi? By no means: Why then should you think that Noah's curse could justify any man for enslaving the race of Canaan? Again, said Jacob, "Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path." Did this prediction entitle that tribe to deal deceitfully with their brethren, or to disseminate poison among them? Or, would it justify the other tribes in cutting them off utterly? Once more, "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf, in the morning he shall devour the prey," &c. Did these words really empower the Benjamites to eat the flesh of their brethren, or to imitate any of the rapacious qualities of the wolf? Or, did they constitute their brethren a society of hunters for clearing the country of the ravenous Benjamites? No such thing. God reserved to himself the sole power of fulfilling

ling all these patriarchal predictions ; and therefore I conclude though Canaan's race be doomed to slavery, yet Providence hath put such a guard about them that no man may touch them and be guiltless. Nay, no man can enslave them, without first enslaving himself : For what is the meaning of the phrase, a servant of servants ? One of these two things. 1. A wretched, despicable slave. And what does this imply the master to be ? What, but a wretched, despicable and mean-spirited tyrant, a slave of avarice, ambition and the basest vices ? For a man of a truly free, generous and noble disposition can never bring a rational creature, or even a brute to a state of wretchedness. 2. A slave of slaves. And what does this imply ? Very plainly that the master is a slave as well as the servant ; for the words are not a servant of free men, but of servants or slaves. And indeed, if the truth may be confessed, the master is by much the greater slave of the two ; for a man of fine dispositions may be enslaved if he meet with a stronger than himself, but none, save a very wretch, will enslave. As far as I see, Reverend Sir, you are under the necessity of renouncing every thing amiable, divine or human, before the curse of Canaan entitle you to enslave your fellow-creatures. You must also grant, 1. That you have hitherto been sinfully negligent in the slave trade ; for if it be a duty at all you should do in it whatsoever your hand findeth to do, with all your might, and yet I believe, you might have done ten times more if you had been zealous enough for the glory of God, and the slavery of man. 2. That all men are to be exhorted and commanded in the name of the Lord to enslave their brethren, and that those who are remiss should be censured. 3. That the laws of Great-Britain, France, Pensylvania, &c. abolishing slavery, laws which are the envy of neighbouring states, are most iniquitous and oppressive, incapacitating the inhabitants from performing the glorious duty of chaining, whipping and killing innocent men.

I shall conclude with the words of a fine writer, " Let avarice defend it as it will, there is an honest reluctance in humanity against considering our fellow-creatures as a part of our possessions."

Reverend Sir, I have perhaps been too free. The subject must be my excuse. If it be not a sufficient one, I sincerely beg your pardon. I did not mean to offend you, but to provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, that I might save them from this sin and disgrace.

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Yours, &c.